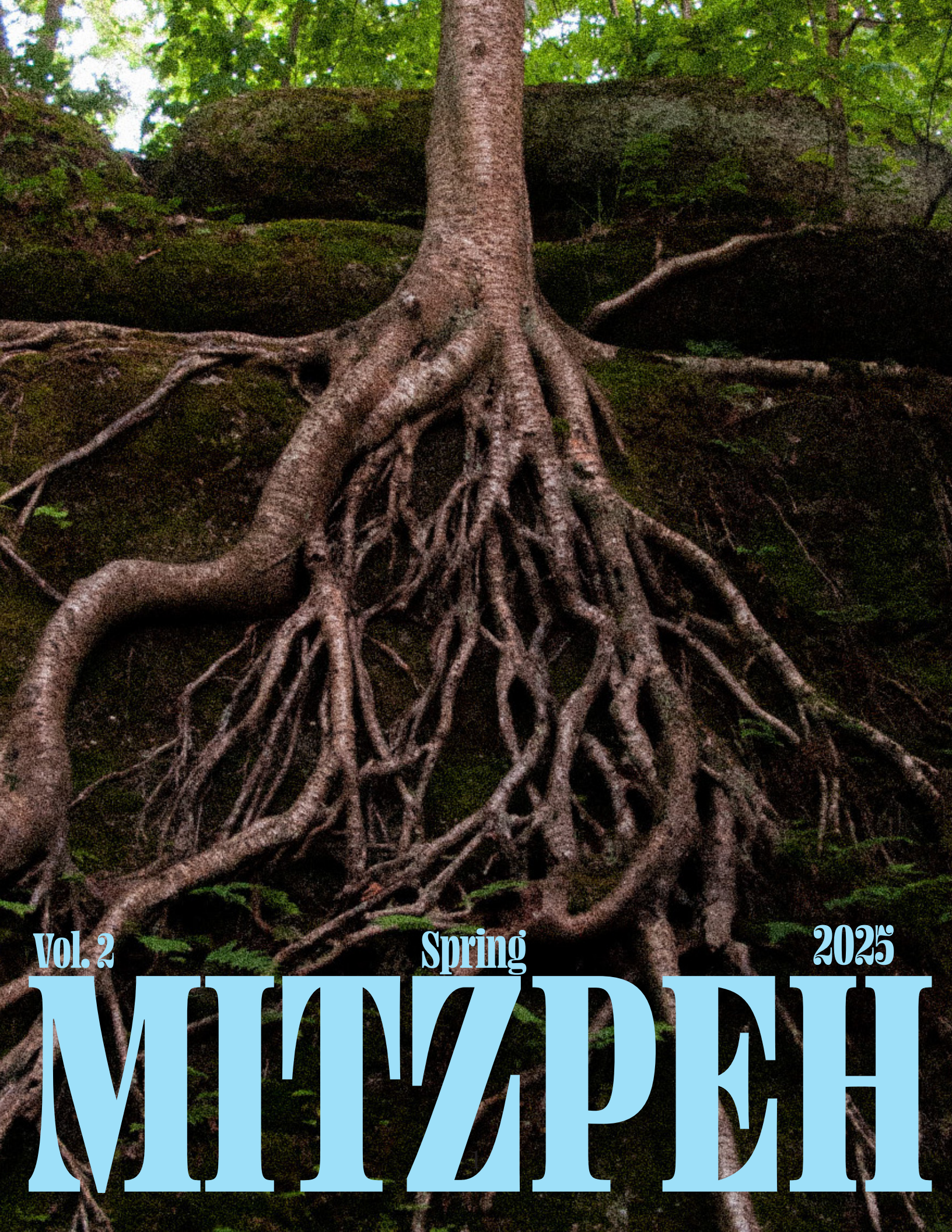

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MITZPEH

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

One could not expect a tree to grow tall and bare fruit without the proper nurturing. If its roots don't have enough water, enough space to explore the soil, or enough sunshine, it will not grow. But if it does receive the proper care, vibrant fruit will emerge. When I think about the future of the Jewish community, I am reminded of this tree. Soon enough, Jewish students will be responsible for bearing new fruit, carryng on the Jewish traditions. They will bring new questions, new songs and new teachings. As sweet and colorful as our new fruit will be, it's important to recognize the significance of our roots. Burgeoning through dark and wet soil, creating a network of interconnected signals, working together to sustain life, a tree's roots work similarly to the teachings of our ancestors. Jewish history is kept alive through our hearts and minds, giving us a foundation from which to grow. By learning and thinking, Jewish students nurtere those roots every day. Exploring the past with a loving and critical mind will ensure our roots grow in just the right fashion to bare new fruits. At Mitzpeh, we are constantly engaging with the ideas of our ancestors, navigating challenges of the present, and writing to inspire change in the future. The Mitzpeh Magazine is an attempt to document this exploration. We sincerely hope you enjoy reading this collection of student writing.

Best, Ava Rowse
Mitzpeh Editor-in-Chief

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Lovesick for God in the age of Tinder

By: Zoe Bayewitz

Shir Hashirim, the Song of Songs, is read on Pesach each year and is considered one of the holiest texts in the Tanach. It recalls a lustful love story between a man and a woman, which Rabbis consider to be an allegory for the relationship between G-d and the Jewish people.

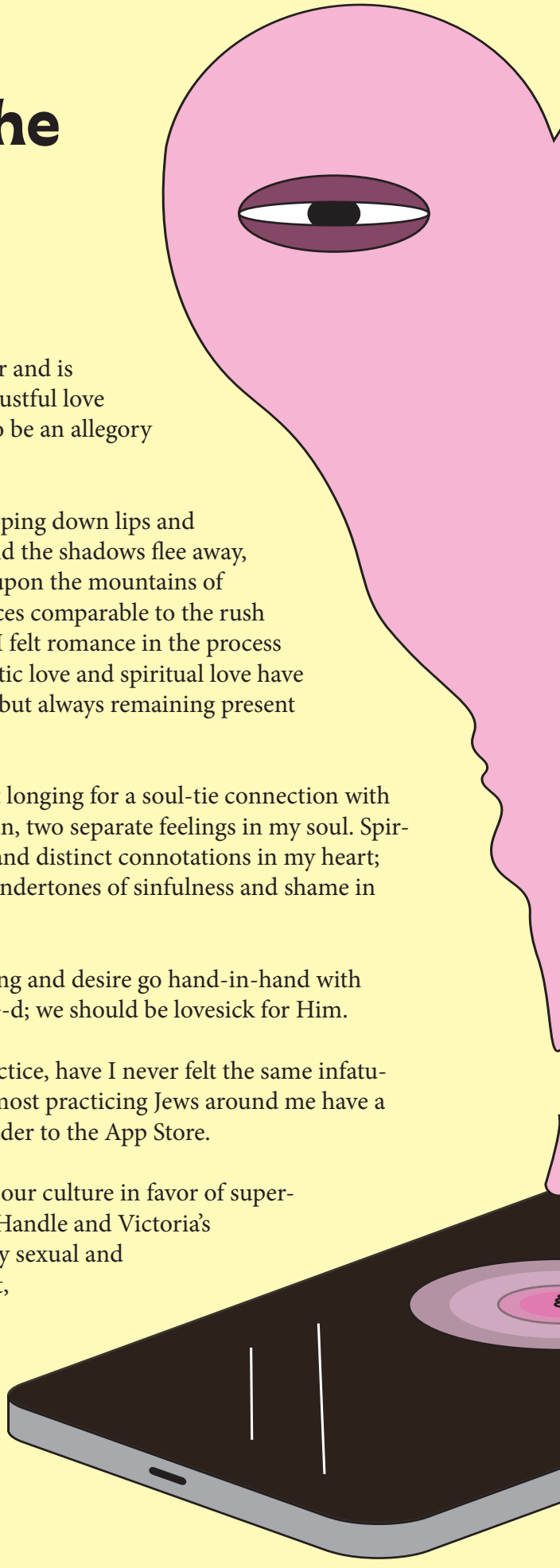
The story is erotic and sensual, with depictions of honey dripping down lips and man's kiss tasting better than wine. "Until the day breathe, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a gazelle or a young hart upon the mountains of spices." While I've had many religious and spiritual experiences comparable to the rush of falling in love, I've never felt lustful toward G-d, nor have I felt romance in the process of building my relationship with Him. The concept of romantic love and spiritual love have held their respective space in my heart, never crossing paths but always remaining present and aware of one another.

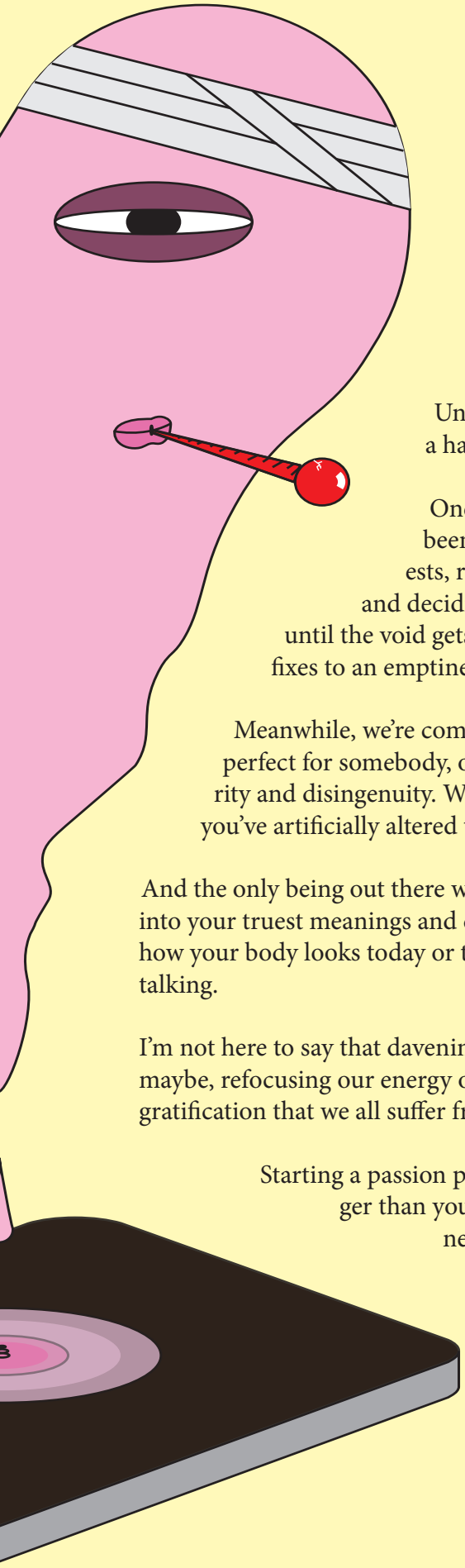
The Zohar, the most important Kabbilistic book, teaches that longing for a soul-tie connection with G-d should feel similar to longing for the kiss of a lover. Again, two separate feelings in my soul. Spiritual longing and physical longing have completely separate and distinct connotations in my heart; one feels righteous and fulfilling, the other feels taboo with undertones of sinfulness and shame in religious contexts.

But these teachings tell us the opposite. Our feelings of longing and desire go hand-in-hand with spiritual growth. We shouldn't just seek a relationship with G-d; we should be lovesick for Him.

So why, after a year in seminary and 21 years of religious practice, have I never felt the same infatuation for G-d that I have for Andrew Garfield? And why do most practicing Jews around me have a similar mindset? I can only blame whatever G-d brought Tinder to the App Store.

This lustful connection with G-d has been completely lost in our culture in favor of superficial connections. Modern creations like Hinge, Too Hot to Handle and Victoria's Secret have presented a very specific type of lust, an especially sexual and superficial one, that has ruined our perception of healthy lust, thereby inhibiting us from experiencing the full breadth of the holiest text we have.





Now, how can we distinguish healthy lust from superficial lust? Both give us a pounding in our chest, an eager eye searching for the object of affection, a desire to be perceived and yet a feeling of insecurity around them.

Unfortunately, the cure for unhealthy lovesickness doesn't come from a vial or a happy little pill.

One of the biggest plagues of our generation is the instant gratification we've been handed on a silver platter: 10 second reels, catered exactly to our interests, resulting in hours of mindless scrolling. Similarly, opening a dating app and deciding in four seconds whether or not you want a person, swiping right or left until the void gets so deep that you feel like you're drowning. We're constantly seeking quick fixes to an emptiness inside of us.

Meanwhile, we're completely altering ourselves to fit perceptions of others. The desire to be perfect for somebody, or to be perfect in general, is an unrealistic expectation that drives insecurity and disingenuity. Wouldn't you rather be desired for your whole self than for pieces of yourself you've artificially altered to be more desirable, but that are inauthentic to who you are?

And the only being out there who knows you for your true self, who can see past your superficiality and into your truest meanings and desires, is waiting for you to realize that He doesn't care what you wear, how your body looks today or the fact that you had food stuck in your teeth the whole time you were talking.

I'm not here to say that davening three times a day will make you never want to open TikTok again. But maybe, refocusing our energy on fulfilling, long-term endeavours will counteract the need for instant gratification that we all suffer from.

Starting a passion project, focusing on face-to-face relationships, jogging for five minutes longer than your body thought it could; these build our tolerances for savoring the sweetness of every second of our lives. Rather than wondering what our next quick fix could be to get us through the day, wouldn't we prefer to feel every second with profound gratitude?

This is all easier said than done. But next time you feel a rush of joy; not from a crush, or a drug, but from the simple light and purity of life, imagine how lovesick G-d must be for you to give you that moment– and how lovesick you should feel in return.

Judaism is Dying and only We can save it

By: Aden Lerner

Beyond the religion, culture, and even the genetic fiber embedded in Jewish DNA, the Jewish people have undeniably worked to separate themselves from all the other nations of the world. Innumerable prominent scholars of history have praised the Jews. The moral foundations of modern Western society were founded on principles that Jews have lived by for eons. A literary and oral tradition unlike any other has blessed the Jews with a rich history of philosophical thought, distinguished us intellectually, enriched our emotional selves, and deepened our actions with intent. Simply put, being Jewish means being distinct in one's thoughts, feelings, and actions; yet, today, Judaism has been redefined.

According to a study done by The Pew Research Center in March 2025, approximately one in four Jews in the United States no longer identify as Jewish. This new trend of dissociation from one's Jewish ancestry and identity has led to a terrifying new reality. The American Jew is dying, and it is not solely at the hands of the antisemite but by the Jewish people themselves. However, this phenomenon is not unique to American Jews, but to the shrinking Jewish populations across the diaspora. As secular society continues to reject theology and tradition, modern Jews are being swept away with the current.

So why are Jews today, unlike those of the past generations, more unaffiliated than ever? And, more importantly, what are the consequences of their disaffiliation with Judaism?
Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, of blessed memory, discussed this phenomenon throughout his intimate ode to Judaism, titled A Letter in the Scroll. Published in the year 2000, amid his first decade as Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom, Rabbi Sacks was puzzled why another great Exodus had happened to the Jews. Today, unlike the Jew of the original Exodus from Egypt, the modern Jew is turning his back on the promised land, Judaism, and assimilating into contemporary secular culture, rejecting the religion altogether.

As long as the Jewish people have existed, there have been those who wished to wipe them from the face of the earth. In those trying times, Jewish people both willingly and unwillingly abandoned their identity, yet their identity never abandoned them. Over the course of Jewish history, in the face of the antisemites, regardless of whether the Jews no longer identified as Jewish, they were targeted and persecuted. The treatment of the conversos during the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions, a historical tragedy, displayed this harsh reality of the Jewish identity. The conversos were the Jews who converted to Christianity and left their Jewish faith behind. Although thousands of Jews converted, societal barriers were erected by the Spanish and Portuguese authorities to continue to oppress them. Even though the Jews were no longer "Jewish," in the eyes of the Catholics, they would always be nothing more than conversos, Jews wearing a Catholic mask.

Even before the inquisitions, there were countless periods when Jews assimilated. Dating back to the book of Ezekiel, the Jews begged God to allow them to be like the other nations. However, God refused. God, in all points of history, protected and aimed to preserve the Jewish nation. God and the Jewish people will always be bound together by their covenant, whether or not the Jews desire this connection. In his book, Rabbi Sacks explains that "Jews might try to assimilate, but they would never succeed. History would conspire to prevent it." Rabbi Sacks makes his point clear: there is a universal force that will never allow the Jewish people to die, no matter how hard some may try.

One general distinction stands out between the previous eras of antisemitism and the new era we face today. During the destruction of the temples, the inquisitions, and the Holocaust, there were powers more substantial than the Jews who physically pressured them to denounce their identity. Today, that is not the case. Finally, the Jewish people have their homeland and are free in over 100 countries to practice their faith. While many still wish to see the downfall of the Jews, the Jews continue to persevere and stay alive. From the pressure exerted against them, like diamonds, the Jewish nation became stronger.

In the late 20th and early 21st century, the dominant culture has become one that prioritizes comfort and convenience over intellectual thought and individual growth. In this era, the Jewish people have become passive. It no longer feels necessary to be Jewish.

Not only that, but in a society that has come to value indolence and instant gratification, Judaism has become an inconvenience. Providing children with a Jewish education is too expensive. Kosher food is hard to come by in many areas, and where it is widely available, unkosher products are often far cheaper. Missing work for Shabbat and holidays is undesirable, and separating from technology for 25 hours has become a torturous burden that too many are unwilling to bear. Therefore, today, many Jews pick and choose what feels convenient for them, but what has become the most popular trend is to cede from the religion and culture in its entirety. The unaffiliated Jew does not have to concern themselves with the burdens that the religion places upon them. What many do not recognize is that these are not burdens but gifts directly from heaven. The laws we are meant to follow are not to create a more difficult life but to enrich our human experience. In the end, like the conversos, those unaffiliated were, and never will be, safe from antisemitism.

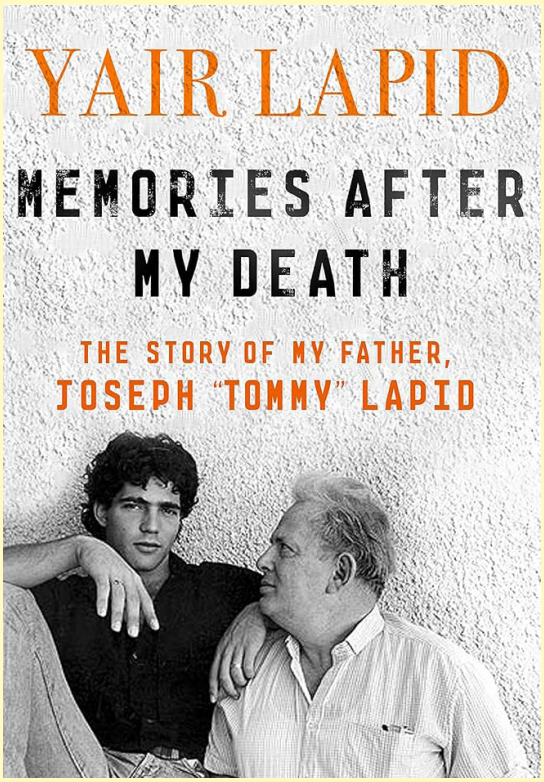
This has become increasingly clear as of October 7th, 2023. Ironically enough, antisemites do not discriminate. Whether a Jew is Chasidic, Reconstructionist, or secular, they are equal participants in whatever scheme the antisemite wishes to blame Jews for. In many instances, the secular Jew has negotiated with the antisemite, allowing him to publicly self-loath to gain approval. The antisemite has become the taskmaster, and like the Jews in Egypt, the secular Jew is now enslaved under their wrath. To be accepted by the dominant culture, Jews are forced to outwardly reject themselves as opposed to doing what is most challenging, swimming upstream against the current.

This is not an effort to persuade individuals to become Orthodox Jews. Rabbi Sacks would strongly agree that blindly latching on to religious dogma is equally as harmful as secularization. I do urge, though, that the everyday Jew, specifically on secular college campuses around America, take a look at the world around them. Notice that Jews are not like everyone else, and that no two Jews are the same. I echo Rabbi Sacks' call for self-exploration, which he makes not solely in his book but through his entire life as a Jew. No matter how someone lives their life, if they are genetically Jewish, then they are a Jew. Nonetheless, to embody the values of Judaism is to look introspectively into how the religion and its traditions can positively impact one's life. In turn, this process rejects the passivity of the modern Jew and forces, at least in the instance of personal inquiry, the individual to practice Judaism genuinely.

To be a Jew is to ask questions, to dig deep, and not settle for the straightforward answer. To be a Jew is to reject passivity and to yearn for knowledge. To be a Jew, most importantly, is to acknowledge that every person has a piece of the Divine within, and only through active participation can one come closer to that inner presence. As a testament to Rabbi Sacks and his legacy, the Jewish people must stand out now more than ever. They must do more than physically wear a Magen David or Yarmulke, but work to differentiate themselves intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually, the way only Jews know how.

A Man Who Even Death Couldn't Silence

By: Daniel Huber



In "Memories After My Death," a man narrates his life story as he lies in his own grave. Few people would be better suited to the task than Tommy Lapid, an Israeli journalist and politician as famous for his witty and incisive commentary as he was infamous for his towering personality and temper. The book's real author, Yair Lapid, wrote a moving and eloquent biography of his father, Tommy, as if he were speaking directly to the reader in first person, looking back on his life after he died. It chronicles Tommy's life, molded by the history of his people as he molded it. It spans from the depths of hell he experienced as a child in Budapest's Ghettos to the heights of career success in Israel.

Tommy describes an idyllic childhood in Novi Sad, Yugoslavia in the 1930s, cut short by a joint German-Hungarian invasion in 1941. His family was forced into hiding in Budapest for three years, venturing outside only at night to forage for food scraps. After the pro-Nazi coup in Hungary in 1944, they were found and deported to the ghetto. Tommy's father, an unusually doting and intelligent man, was abducted by Hungarian Nazi collaborators to a labor camp, where he was murdered two weeks before the end of the war. Possibly the most heart-wrenching passage in the book was when Tommy saw him for the last time, as he was forced out of the apartment they had hid in at gunpoint. In another memorable passage, Tommy describes an episode where all the Jews of the ghetto were marched to the Danube River to be shot. Just before the massacre, Soviet planes bombed the area, and Tommy and his mother were among the few able to escape amidst the commotion, by hiding in a public restroom. Today, statues of shoes on the banks of the Danube commemorate the victims who were shot, as Tommy reminds us, often by their former friends and neighbors.

Tommy and his mother survived and briefly returned to Yugoslavia before immigrating to Israel on the eve of its own independence war. Tommy volunteered for the army at age 17 and served as a mechanic for three years. He went on to study law at Tel Aviv University, as his beloved father once had in Yugoslavia, and upon graduation worked as an investigative journalist. Tommy gradually established himself as a popular political opinion columnist for Maariv, then Israel's most-read newspaper. Again he was inspired by his father, who wrote weekly legal opinions in a Yugoslav newsheet. Tommy's work reflected his boisterous personality and sharp intellect. He made a name for himself writing acerbic weekly editorials usually assailing some policy of Israel's then ruling Labor party.

When the Likud, Israel's largest right-wing party, came to power in 1977, Tommy was offered

director generalship of Israel's state Broadcasting Authority for a five-year term. Despite being a political appointee, he insisted on keeping news neutral and was committed to presenting opinions from across the political spectrum. The reader sees how Tommy's experiences opposing government ministers' attempts to interfere with the content of broadcasts inspired his future career change and lifelong support for freedom of the press. After returning to Maariv for a few years, he became a household name in Israel in the 1990s as a host of the extremely popular political talk show Popolitika, where Tommy was famous for his entertaining shouting matches with guests.

Now famous, Tommy joined the centrist party Shinui, which translates to change, and entered the Knesset for the first time in 1999. In the 2003 elections, he became party chairman and won 15 seats out of 120 by running on a secularist platform. Tommy became Minister of Justice in Ariel Sharon's coalition, a position similar to attorney general in the United States. Tommy was focused on defending the judiciary from political influence and on decreasing the power of ultra orthodox special interests in the government. On both these issues, Tommy was far ahead of his time.
Tommy was unequivocal in his support for the independence of the courts. While he was minister, some members of his own coalition attempted to pass a law allowing the Knesset to control the Supreme Court's judge selection process, much as the Netanyahu government is trying to do today. Tommy led a successful effort to defeat the law. He said, "the reason I decided to emphasize this matter is because I have no doubt that there will come the day that the followers of this idea will introduce it once more. The enemies of the rule of law in Israel are patient people, and they are sure to try again and again." Tommy's prediction was spot on. The reader understands that the conflict over judicial independence has a long history in Israel. In 2003, a diehard believer in democracy named Tommy Lapid stood athwart the unprincipled impulses of these unscrupulous government ministers. Two decades later, his absence is sorely felt among Israel's present leadership.
Tommy's political career was ultimately broken by what had launched it: a staunchly secularist ideology. He was elected on a pledge to never sit in a coalition with Ultra-Orthodox parties. However, Ariel Sharon ultimately convinced Tommy to join his government alongside Ultra-Orthodox factions in order to enable the 2005 Gaza disengagement, which Tommy supported. Despite casting votes in the Knesset against subsidies for the Ultra-Orthodox and continuing to call for their integration into broader society, Israeli voters were angered by Tommy's unfulfilled promise.

After disappointing results in the Shinui primaries, Tommy retired. Without his leadership, Shinui failed to win a single seat in the 2006 elections. Despite his failure to fix this particular issue, the reader appreciates Tommy's comprehension of the danger of letting special religious interests amass too much power, well before it became the massive problem it is for Israel today. The reader is left to wonder what might have happened had Israel followed Tommy's proposals and ended financial subsidies to Haredi draft dodgers twenty years ago and not had to deal with the problem during this current war.
In retirement, Tommy served as director of Yad Vashem and continued publishing articles until his death after a battle with cancer in 2008. At the conclusion of the book, available in both Hebrew and English, the reader feels a deep familiarity not only with Tommy's work as a journalist and public figure, but with the history through which he lived and the subtleties of his enormous personality and wit, expertly captured in writing by his son. Memories After My Death is an intimate and touching biography, a Jewish history lesson, and a close examination of Israel's democracy all in one. I strongly recommend it.

Back to the Land – Jewish Students in Agriculture

By: Mattie Newgent

The University of Maryland began as the Maryland College of Agriculture in 1856 and was established as a land grant university nine years later. In 1916 it was renamed the Maryland State College of Agriculture. With a rich history in agricultural practices, the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources prides itself on innovation and education in agricultural fields of animal science, environmental science, and agricultural economics.

In recent years, many Jewish students have found their place in the field of agriculture, merging passions for sustainability, animal welfare, and environmentalism with deep cultural and religious significance. Rooted in Jewish traditions that emphasize stewardship of the land, these students are not only forging a path towards a more sustainable future in multiple facets of agriculture, but also fostering connections to the biblical teachings of the Torah. As the world grapples with environmental challenges, Jewish students in agriculture, environmental and animal science prove that their work is a continuation of cultural values and a critical step towards a sustainable future.

UMD Students with campus lamb

For some students, the values embedded in Judaism offer a meaningful perspective on their academic pursuits. Concepts like tikkun olam, or repairing the world, resonate strongly with students in the college of agriculture and natural resources, studying various areas that seek to protect the environment. This greater responsibility shapes their commitment to a brighter future.

UMD Student with Campus Cow

Junior animal science major Esther Baum shares that she has a deep commitment to tikkun olam. "I've always had a passion for agriculture throughout my whole life, I grew up riding horses and being outside all the time." Baum grew up in a Modern Orthodox community in Great Neck, New York. She has a passion for bovine science and wants to work in the dairy industry post-grad. "Agriculture is all around us, and in the spirit of tikkun olam, it's important to recognize that the food we eat, the land we walk on, and everything surrounding us comes from the shamayim and Hashem. It's important to recognize that in our Judaism, Hashem provides us with everything."

Baum's perspective highlights how the concept of interconnectedness between the Earth and the people is deeply ingrained in Jewish teachings. This belief is echoed by students like Orrin Berkeley, a senior animal science major with a background in veterinary medicine. Berkeley expresses a deep appreciation for animals through a religious lens, seeing their existence as interconnected.

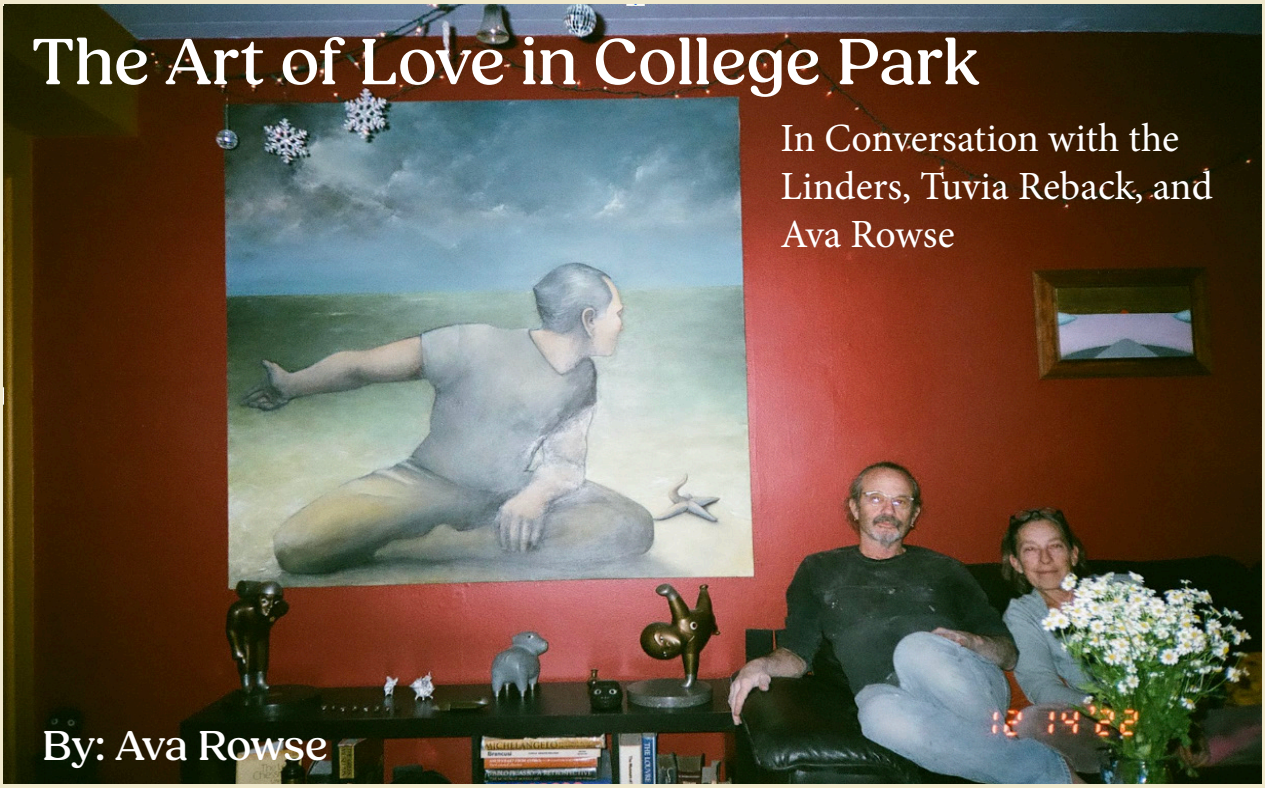
"In my year at yeshiva, I learned about Rebbe Nachman who was into the idea that everything has life and is there for a reason, and everything is a loving creature of God. I think that played into how I feel about animals and the fact that we have to protect them because there are times where they can't protect themselves.

In the opposite direction, animals help us through our own mental struggles too. At a base level, I believe in giving everything a chance at a full, fulfilling life."

Universirty of Maryland's Agricultural Experiment Station, courtesy of UMD

This connection between spirituality and science is a common theme among Jewish students in agriculture. Shayna Silverman is a senior studying environmental science and policy. Originally from Pittsburgh, she now works at a Jewish day school, where her dedication to education and community reflects her values in agriculture. "As I've been teaching with the school we've been going through units each month like achrayut, responsibility to others, and selem elohim, meaning we're all made in the image of God. The units come out in each thing that I learn in agriculture, especially in my wildlife courses, it's all about conservation. We have to protect our Earth and our environment so that people in the future can use the land as well." Silverman holds her religious values close to her heart when navigating the world of environmental science "In my environmental justice class, we talked about how these environmental policies impact minority communities and that definitely relates to concepts I grew up with in my synagogue like respect and equality. As long as I uphold my Jewish values, that's most important to me."

Jewish students in agriculture are a powerful reminder of how tradition and progress can coexist. These students are spearheading the next generation of Jewish scientists and environmentalists, emboldening others to protect vulnerable creatures and repair the world in the spirit of their ancestors before them. Their stories are a testament to the enduring relevance of Jewish values and the potential for a brighter future for every community, animal, and ecosystem.



The Art of Love in College Park

In Conversation with the Linders, Tuvia Reback, and Ava Rowse

By: Ava Rowse

Allen and Liza, sitting in their living room, courtesy of Tuvia Reback

Sitting just half a mile from campus, lies an ancient brick walk-up that probably seems unremarkable to most. However, to Tuvia Reback, who graduated from UMD in 2023, it always had an indescribable charm. Soon after he discovered the building in the Fall of 2022, his fascination with the building was quickly surpassed by his admiration for a pair of its inhabitants, whom he met in a most unusual fashion.

"I was wandering around College Park one night, with my film point-and-shoot in hand. I'm not sure what I was looking for exactly..."

After taking a number of pictures of the neighborhood under the setting sun, Tuvia began to make his way back home to College Park Towers. Now dark, windows from each building illuminated the street. As he passed his favorite brick building on the corner of Princeton Ave and Hartwick Rd, he couldn't help but peer into a particularly fascinating window.

"At first, I thought there were mannequins standing in the apartment, which wouldn't have surprised me too much — just outside, I noticed beautiful sculptures sitting in a small garden. However, upon closer inspection, I realized that the faces looking back at me were two-dimensional impressions on enormous canvases covering the walls of the apartment. I figured that whoever lived in this home was a collector, and I suddenly felt determined to photograph their collection."

So Tuvia did something a bit unorthodox according to most social norms — he knocked on the stranger's door. Most ordinary people would be suspicious of a young man knocking at their door after dark, but the Linders are not ordinary people.

"I'm not sure how or why, but Liza enthusiastically welcomed me into her home, and called to her husband Allen to come meet me. It turned out, he was the artist behind it all — he had painted all the pieces himself, and sculpted all the figures himself. I was in pure awe of his creations."

After a few hours of conversation over tea and cookies, Tuvia became fast friends with the Linders (who are both around his parents' age). Allen and Tuvia bonded over their Jewish heritage as well as their mutual love of photography. Liza and Tuvia bonded over their mutual love of poetry and her "Be Here Now" bumper sticker (a book by the Jewish-Yogi spiritualist, Ram Dass).

"By the end of the night, they had invited me to come back for their Winter Solstice party, and to bring as many friends as I'd liked. I knew it was the beginning of a wonderful friendship."

Tuvia and I had the chance to sit with the Linders to hear their story. We asked them about religion, art, love, and struggle. We chose to start at the beginning.

Allen told me about one of his earliest creative endeavours, at a time when Judaism was a central focus in his life. Just before his bar mitzvah, he built a tiny motorized Torah scroll out of toothpicks, coffee-tattered paper, cardboard, a hand-sewn cover, and a molded yad. On the inside, he wrote the Shema prayer.

"I was totally enamored with the spectacle of the arc. The jewels and gold and velvet, the silver - it was just what was in my head at the time."

Allen's Jewish background undoubtedly plays a role in his art, although in a subconscious way. His art is a free-flowing form of self-expression, and Judaism was an important part of his life growing up. Allen said his childhood was filled with "Jewishness."

"It was like a Woody Allen film. It's noisy, cousins at the dinner table, passing around food, kind of making fun of Presbyterian families," he said while imitating holding a tea cup, his pinky risen. He described how his family never went on vacation, instead they visited grandparents and cousins, gathering for family events.

Formal Jewish practice looks differently for Allen now, but him and Liza are deeply spiritual people, and spend much of their time contemplating and engaging with the divine.

"I would clearly say that the concept of God is all that I ever think about," Allen reflected.

"It's the only thing I really think about or care about or try to live in accordance with. Whatever that concept is, I'm not attaching it to anything, but it's the only thing that actually exists, as far as this little Jewish boy is concerned."

Along with God, Allen has long been enamored by art, and has spent his life expressing himself through it.

Before attending the University of Maryland, he became obsessed with taking photographs and learning about the development process in his father's dark room. Once at college, he got a job in the photography lab of the Zoology department, where his father was a professor. During the downtime between waiting for lecture slides to develop, he read a copy of The Agony and The Ecstacy, a novel about the life of Michelangelo.

"That book resonated so strongly with me. It blew me the fuck away," Allen remembered, drawing on what inspired him to declare a major of Fine Arts. Struck with an uncrushable determination to try stone carving like Michelangelo himself, he stole a piece of stone from the Fine Arts building. What he thought was marble turned out to be the much less valuable limestone, but he carved into it a head with a claw hammer and marlin spike, notably amateur tools.

Collection of Allen Linder's Stone Carving

With one carved head under his belt, he went through his arts degree requirements, practicing drawing and painting before he could touch a stone again. However, upon taking his first stone carving class with renowned American sculptor, Kenneth Campbell, Allen knew he found something special.

Man Pushing Through by Allen Linder (2000) | Tuvia Reback

"When I had taken my first stone carving class, pretty much everything else fell away. The relationship I had with Ken was that of a master and apprentice."

In fact, Allen was so dedicated to his craft that it took roughly 40 years of carving stones for him to think about picking up painting again, which he only did within the past several years.

Stone carving is a practice of process. That's what drew Allen to it initially, the unique process which his mentor, Ken Campbell, taught him.

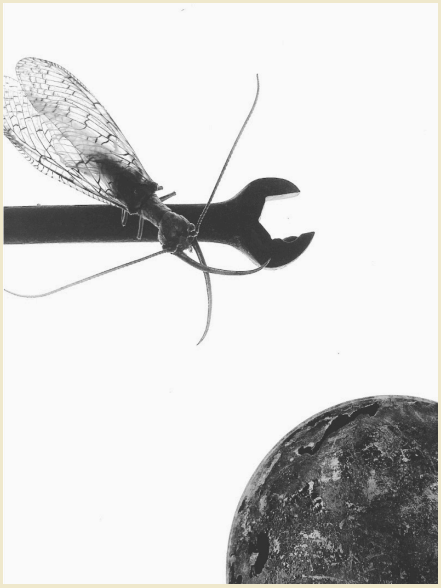
"The form is already buried in the stone, it's a matter of discovering it," Allen shared about the evolving nature of stone carving.

"I don't use drawings, I don't use models. I actually don't really even start with preconceived ideas. I just feel my way through the forms and volumes and I simultaneously arrive at a sculpture, while I'm also dreaming of what it might be about."

There is of course an intellectual and learned aspect to stone carving, which he acquired from Ken Campbell throughout his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Fine Arts. But overall "it's far more emotional than it is intellectual."

Here at the University of Maryland, Allen met his first loves: Stones, Ken Campbell, and most importantly, Liza.

"We were in a drawing class together. We probably knew of each other because we were both pretty serious about being art students," said Liza, describing how she met her husband.



The Vigilant Mechanic by Liza Linder (2020)

While refusing the title of "artist," Liza, too, never stopped tinkering with creative expression post-college. Welcoming a challenge (and savoring the opportunity to learn something new), her mediums have spanned from written poetry to macro-photographic compositions of found objects and insects.
I met the Linders many decades after their first encounter and they seem to have only grown deeper in love. Around their living room stand dozens of sculptures made of different stones and metals, paintings hang on the wall, and photographs of their children are on every table. In their work you can see a common thread. Moments of their life depicted ambiguously, but authentically.

On the wall to the right of us was a massive painting of Allen, sitting with his knees bent on the ground floating a leaf in his hand. Next to him was a bird, turning her head slightly, unimpressed.

"I call it the Mystery of Love because that's real. I look at that bird, and I know it doesn't physically look like Liza, but if that's not Liza reacting to me trying to impress her. For God's sake if this beautiful bird isn't just like Liza, not trying to be anything other than herself."

Linders with Mystery of Love | Ava Rowse

I turned to look at the painting, then back around to Allen and Liza. He was sitting in the same position, and her head was turned just like the bird.

It was clear to me when I met the Linders that their life was dedicated to both art and family. We discussed what it meant to be a successful artist, whether that's measured by the amount of galleries you're featured in, or the amount of pieces you've sold, or if people know your name. Allen has been in galleries and he's sold many of his pieces, but he didn't consider himself "in the game of success."

Yet, when I see Allen and Liza's house, I can feel the success. I see two individuals who have pursued art because they love it, and they've molded everything else in their lives to sustain that love. I see a couple that continue to choose each other again and again. As everything around them changes, their love for each other grows stronger and keeps them afloat.

A life dedicated to art is rarely an affluent one, so it took courage and coordination to make the life they wanted possible.

"None of it would have happened if Liza hadn't been our family's financial support system," Allen refers to when Liza became a public school art teacher in 1999 and brought a newfound sense of security to their family. For years, the two of them had worked dozens of odd jobs, taking turns with their children when they were home. Until she started working for PG County public schools, they'd never seen a paycheck with a number that big.

Liza refrained from using the words 'sacrifice' or 'compromise,' as she felt they carry negative connotations. Instead, she insisted, "someone had to do it, someone had to make it happen, anyone would have done what I did to make it work. And it's still working."

Throughout all the changes in their lives, one thing has remained constant.

"Our relationship. The foundation through it all is our relationship. Just me and him. You call that love where I come from," Liza said.

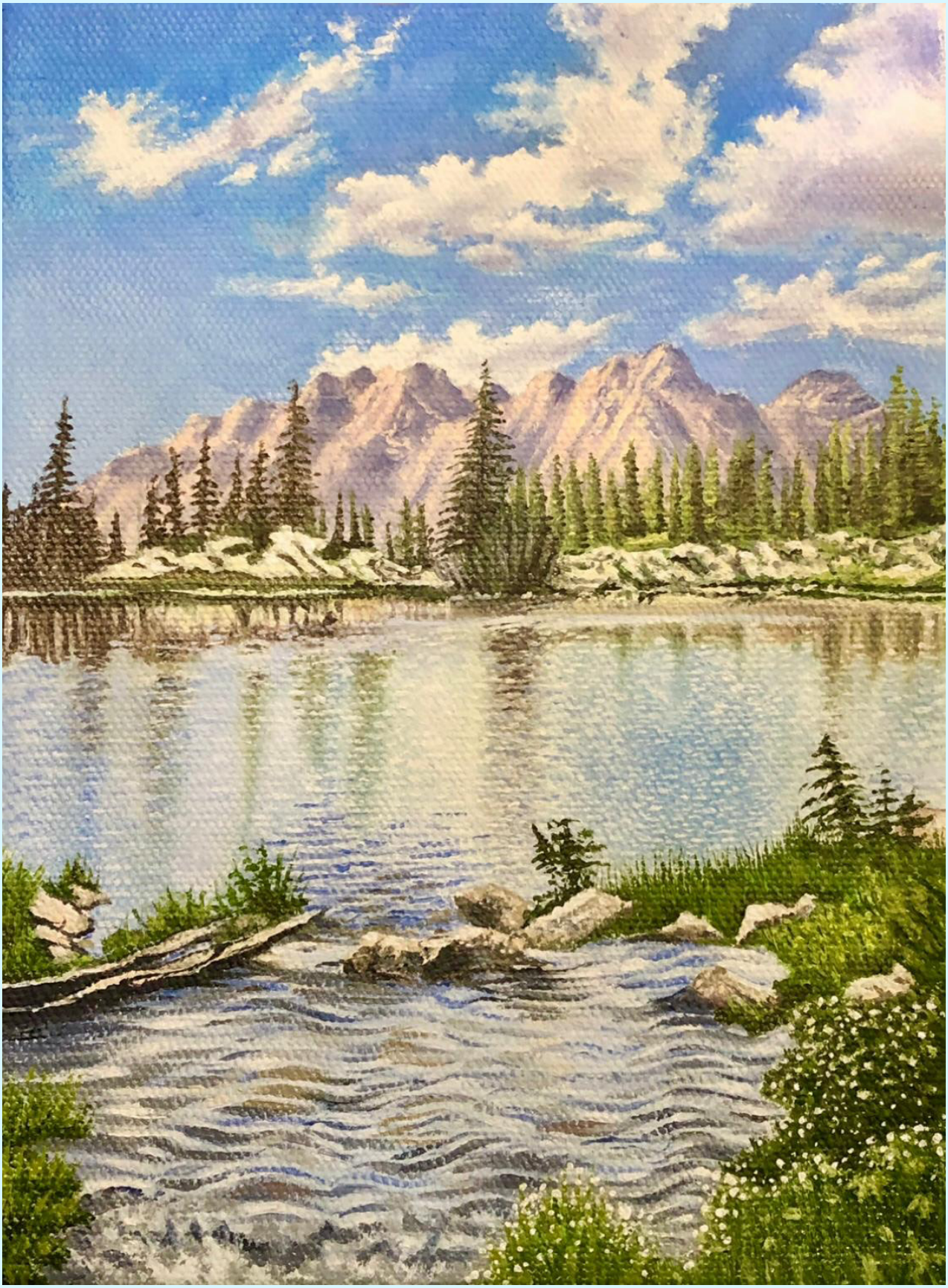
Allen and Liza in 1984, courtesy of the Linders

Allen smiled and added "love connotes only happy and good, but the relationship is a balance. The weaving back and forth to create something that stays together."

They describe themselves as people who live to experience, not to reach a certain goal. Their relationship is their goal, and "the goal is that the life should be this unfolding thing you're happy to be in. When you have two people who feel that way, it's miraculous."

Much like stone carving, Allen and Liza's life has been more of an ongoing discovery than a fixed design. In a world that measures success in wealth and status, Allen and Liza have found theirs in something more enduring: a love that, like stone, withstands the test of time.

“Blue Ridges” Painted by Jasmine Hall in 2025



“Harim Saviv” Painted by Yonina Levisohn in 2024

“Flight from Stonehenge” by Jessica Daninhirsch in 2024

“Journeys” by Ava Rowse in 2023

There is Magic

in movement.
In stasis.

Her arms laze on the sky. The tips of her fingers impress the clouds.
She is my model. Her Posture patiently yearns to be drawn, yet
I am frightened.
Her Complexity could be too great to capture.

She comforts me. She reassures me. She tells me to believe.
She tells me there's magic in me.
She tells me like she knows me.

I am but an amateur -- pretending
My hand is a master of a blank canvas.

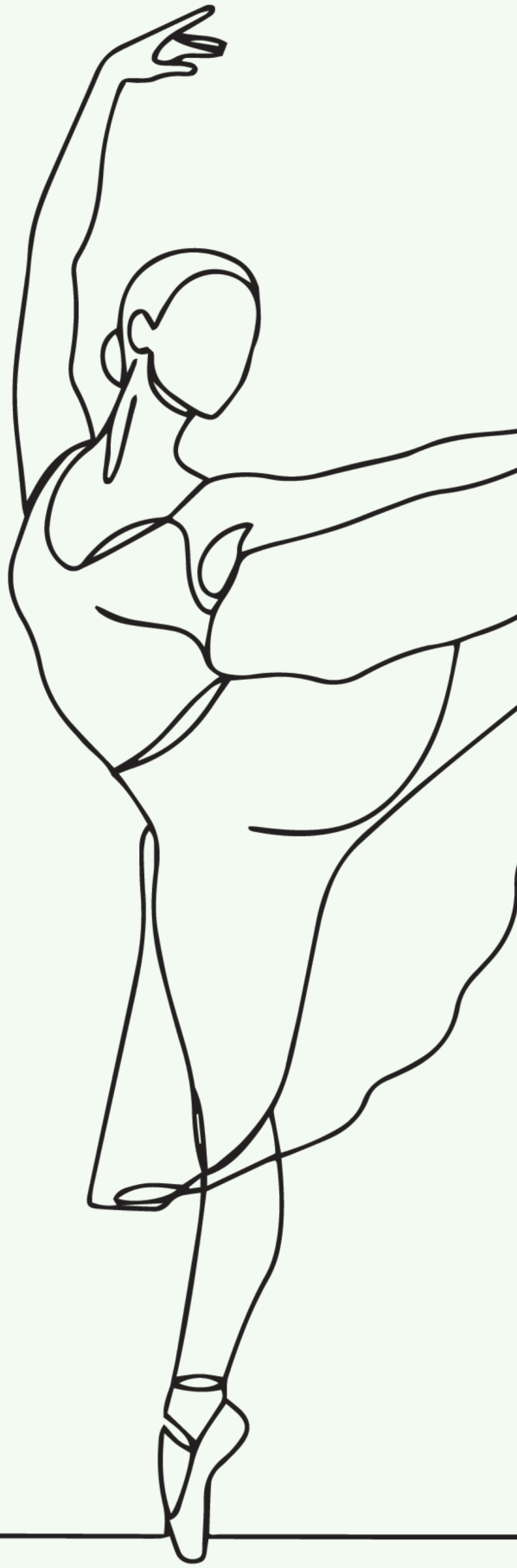
The truth is: she is the magic. My hand--
I am only human.
I can't Make still life move.
I can only dream.

She stands there waiting for me, I know.
she won't stay forever. Soon, she'll wear a new dress.
one others must know.

Is it unfair of me to refuse? Let her
Exist in my mind as a dancer en pointe
Basking in her ovation.

If I draw her,
She'll stay

EB



What it Means to be a Jew

By: Leora Rothschild

I checked the clock, I had exactly 18 minutes.

Standing in my t-shirt and black skirt stained with remnants of Friday cooking, I stared at my closet, attempting to find an outfit for Shabbat. I still needed to take the chicken out of the oven, say the afternoon prayers, turn the light off in the refrigerator, and set up the candles. I grabbed my black Zara sweater, a floral midi skirt, and my black, slip-on Steve Maddens.

I then ran to the bathroom, eager to plug in my blow dryer, and to my despair, I was faced with a locked door and the sound of the shower running. My younger brother running late was no surprise.

I glanced at my phone; only 12 minutes left.

I ran back to my room, grabbing the hand mirror from my mother's vanity, and rushed to plug in my hair dryer. As I feverishly blow-dried my hair, I texted my friends to coordinate Shabbat afternoon plans, asking what time we would meet and where.

After a few minutes, I attempted to fix my disheveled hair as I heard the oven timer beep. I ran downstairs to take the chicken out of the oven.

With 9 minutes to spare, I ran to set the table, shut the refrigerator light, set up the candles, quickly said the afternoon prayers, and with 1 minute left, I stood with my mother as she lit the candles, welcoming in the Shabbat. I took a deep breath and felt the peace of Shabbat enter my home.

The pre-shabbat rush has become a familiar and shared experience of the community I grew up in. I was raised in a Modern-Orthodox home in a large, well-known, religious, Jewish community. My whole life, I have had a relatively insular and confined view of Judaism. Religious men and women spoke and dressed with poise and modesty. Parents in my community, like my own, raised their children with Jewish values like respecting the elderly, giving thanks, and speaking kindly about others.

However, until I spent a gap year in Israel after high school, I hadn't realized the world of Judaism I had been deprived of. The physical practices that guided my Jewish experience looked incredibly different for many people outside my hometown. For example, in Israel, a room full of Jewish people looked different than one I'd ever been in. The room consisted of varying skin colors, languages, outfits, versions of prayer, places of origin, and levels of observances.

Throughout my year in Israel, I learned that even religious Judaism was not uniform. Modest dress did not always consist of a black knee-length skirt, students questioned Jewish texts, women learned in rigorous Torah study programs, and there were men in ultra-orthodox army units.

In exposing myself to the expansive world of Jewish practice, I finally learned, after 12 years in the private Jewish education system, the true meaning of "being a Jew."

It was never about perfecting physical practices; rather, Judaism was about contributing to the outside world with pride and humility. Two words that seem contradictory, but nevertheless perfectly encapsulate Jewish faith and practice.

In Martin Buber's book, Tales of the Hasidim: Later Masters, he wrote of a story that, to me, accurately described this essential Jewish dichotomy. He wrote of a rabbi who carried two pieces of paper, one in each pocket. One paper quoted a verse in Hebrew stating, "for my sake the world was created." The other quoted a verse spoken by Abraham, "I am but dust and ashes."

This story presents an integral concept in Judaism. While humans are the children of God, and thus hold a responsibility to act with their heads held high, humans are also to remember that they are merely a child of God, not God Himself. Humans are capable of creating beautiful things in this world, but at the same time, humans have limited abilities.

Seeing the vast world of different types of Jewish people, I realized it was never about the food, clothing, books, or any other material factor. It was about the values these physical aspects represented.

However, the differing Jewish practices have often led to a debate on how Jewish practices began, evolved, and became internalized in the Jewish communities around the world. Communities, like the Sephard and Ashkenaz Jews or Reform and Orthodox Jews, often refuse to intermingle or even give simple respect to the other's community.

Instead of arguing and refusing to respect one another, Jewish communities can practice in their own way while giving space for people different from themselves to practice in the way that brings them closer to God.

The levels and differences of observances are a testament to the many schools of thought that exist in Judaism. As explained in the Talmudic story about Beit Shammai and Hillel, even two diametrically opposed opinions can and are "both the words of the living God." This line in the Talmud is a testament to the value we have always placed on different opinions and practices of Judaism.

While two Jews may look and practice differently, it is a "true Jew" that respects and values another who is different from him or herself. This is the living practice of the Jewish dichotomy: being proud of the journey one has taken, while humbling oneself to respect and listen to the voice of another.

My journey in exploring the vast world of Jewish practice only grew when I arrived at the University of Maryland. Every week I sit at a table with students from all walks of life, who identify as Jewish. In the Jewish student paper, every person speaks, looks, and practices differently, but the Jewish mission connects everyone in the room: to engage in the world around ourselves, to listen to another person with humility, and contribute to the world with passion and confidence. After all, both of our ideas are "the words of the living God."

Throughout college, I learned that this Jewish value is one that can and should be translated into all aspects of my life. Every person, no matter our differences, must be respected and heard. The true way to approach the world with Jewish values is to recognize that every person, Jewish or not, has a voice. I just need to listen.

This idea mirrors the Jewish idea that all people, Jewish or not, were created by God in the image of God. As Holocaust survivor Edith Carter eloquently and truthfully expressed, "Everybody, every human being, has the obligation to contribute to this world." To be a Jew is to look beyond myself and see how I can both impact others and learn from others. To be a Jew is to create a world where we are valued, and where we value others.

While the "18 minute rush" before Shabbat is an experience that connects me to many in the Jewish-Orthodox world, those 18 minutes are representative of a bigger familial connection. For centuries, the Jewish people have been connected to one another through the Torah, its values and laws. While the person sitting next to me may not rush in the 18 minutes before shabbat the way I so often do, I can nonetheless turn to my neighbor with pride and humility, to inquire and share about the ways in which we are different and alike.

I can be proud of the community I reside in, while humbly learning from the stranger beside me. And, maybe the stranger is just as different from me as I thought, but maybe if I listen, I can learn from him or her to bridge the gap between us.

To be a Jew, and a respectful human being, is to proudly speak for my community, while humbly inquiring about another's.

The Peculiar Process of Creation

By: Liad Mussaffi

A Philosophical Approach to Bereshit

Bereshit, the story of creation, is nothing short of peculiar.

Unlike other ancient texts, Bereshit seems to have no rhyme or reason embedded in each word. But what if the ancient wisdom of the Torah was so carefully curated not to be taken as literal but as a lesson? To be read and analyzed not as a linguistic mystery, but as a philosophical canon? To be true, not real.

When we take a philosophical reading approach to Bereshit, we can better understand our apotheosis and human nature not as Torah scholars or scientists, but as what we are– humans.

Only then can we begin to unravel the chaos that is Genesis I.

Every word and detail, whether literal or not, is truthful and insightful for an anthropological understanding.

Creation was not Random

There are two assertions God made from the get-go. The opening verse of Bereshit says "in the beginning, God created the heavens and the Earth."

One: by asserting the act of creation done by God, God is rejecting any competing alternatives of celestial beings.

Two: by quantifying the Universe's existence to having a starting point, God is claiming the cosmos is not eternal.

Therefore we are covertly being told as readers that Genesis I is not merely a story about the origins of the universe but rather one of human understanding, divine authority, and the nature of existence.

By rejecting other deities and claiming a definitive timeline, Bereshit is challenging ancient ideas of self-sustaining cosmos, reinforcing the notion that everything that exists is contingent on divine intention. It is from this we learn there is nothing random about creation.

The Importance of Choice

The second verse is even more perplexing than the first.

"Now the earth was astonishingly empty, and darkness was on the face of the deep, and the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the water."

In Hebrew, the words tohu vavoho—astonishingly empty—are notoriously difficult to comprehend. The earth mentioned is widely accepted to be a primordial earth, which is to be distinguished from the earth created on Day Four. The text establishes a contrast between a chaotic earth and a purposeful one.

During this time of disorder, God brought forth light. This suggests that goodness was present, not created.

Then, there was a separation between light and darkness. This light and darkness can be understood as spirituality or forces of good and evil. This theme of dichotomy is present everywhere: the yetzer hara and the yetzer tov. The angel and devil. The yin and the yang.

From the start of creation, we are introduced to the duality that makes humans human: choice. When there is a "separation," there is a choice. Human nature mimics creation. The separation between light and darkness, heavens and Earth and land and sea reinforces that duality is intrinsic to human nature. Separation fosters choice.

The Unusual Order

We are introduced to a sequential order of creation:

Day One: light and the separation of light, darkness appeared

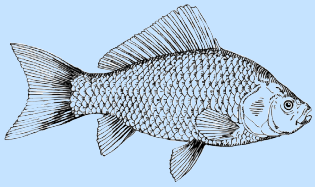
Day Two: Heavens that separate the water below and above.

Day Three: the seas, Earth, and vegetation.

Day Four: the sun and stars.

Day Five: fish and birds

Day Six: humans and animals.



The most glaring difficulty is the sun (day four) being created after vegetation (day three). On all scientific accounts, this is a massive problem if interpreted literally.

"From what point of view is it intelligible that the vegetative world should precede the sun?" Scientist Leo Strauss said.

Vegetation was created on day three, the same day the earth was created. It explicitly says in Genesis I that vegetation was brought forth by the earth. "And God said, 'Let the earth sprout vegetation…And the earth gave forth vegetation.'"

Therefore, there was no divine making in the creation of vegetation; it belongs to earth. When it comes to animals, it was God who brought them forth, not the earth. This clear distinction may suggest that God was more interested in creation having a theme than being clear.

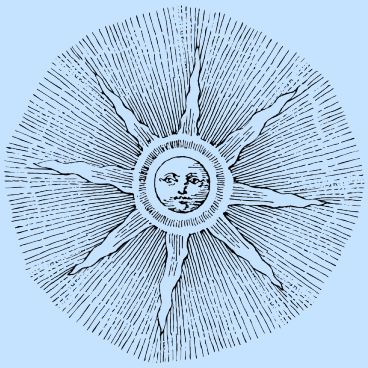
There is a deliberate organization of the six days. According to Strauss, the first three days focus on the formation of space–light, sky and sea and vegetation— while the latter days focus on the corresponding elements to those spaces—heavenly bodies, animals and humans. The first three days lack "local motion" while the last three days encompass movement. The sequence of creation, namely vegetation coming before the sun, is not meant to fit into a chronological order but rather a thematic structure. Plants are stationary, representing the Earth's stability, while the sun is in constant motion.

"Vegetation precedes the sun because vegetation lacks local motion and the sun possesses it," said Strauss. "Vegetation belongs to the earth; it is rooted in the earth; it is the fixed covering of the fixed earth."

Another theory, according to author Leon Kass, is God claiming His authority, yet again. It is likely that if the sun was created before vegetation, humans may make the faulty assumption that the sun is responsible for plants and therefore, food. We would then worship the sun. God wants us to know that the sun is merely His creation, not a creator.

Human-centered focus

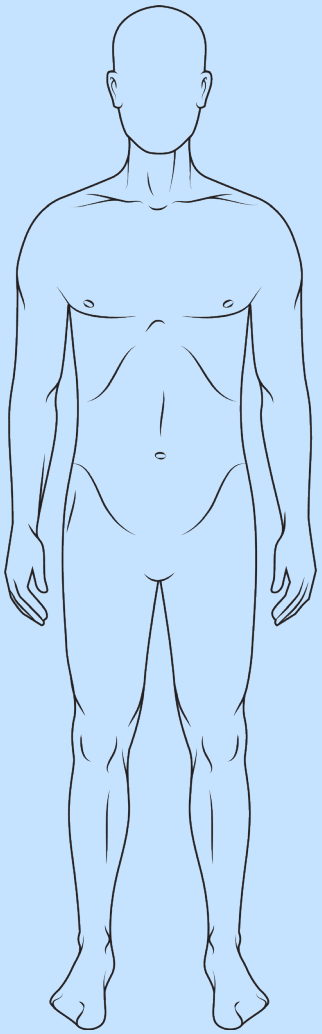
If God created vegetation before the sun because He understood how we would glorify the sun, creation was intentionally worded to be digestible for human-centered theology. The language of Bereshit indicates that it was written for humans to understand it, highlighting our role in interpretation.



This order has an earth-centered focus and a human-perception description. The Torah uses language that is native to our experience as humans. Namely, sight. It describes the sea as the world below and the Heavens as the world above. This is a measurement that we can trust because we perceive it this way. A sea creature 1,000 feet below sea level does not have the same experience as below meaning the ocean. For them, it is above or center. By addressing human beings through a way in which we experience life, we can infer that the Torah is meant to be written and read for humans and from our point of view.

Before a heliocentric model was accepted, humans primarily believed the sun revolved around the Earth. That means then for generations, the Torah would immediately be deemed false. Creation had to be written in a way that predates changing modern standards. It had to be written with a why focus, not how.

The story of Genesis therefore was never meant to serve as a scientific truth. Its purpose is rooted in communicating deeper insights about who God is and His relationship to humans. This could never be properly articulated if Genesis made immediate sense at first glance.



Dear Wandering Jew,

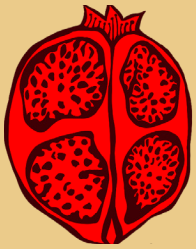
We are the organizers of Chavurah, a student-led, progressive, and inclusive Jewish community here in College Park. We come together for Shabbat, collective education, creative and spiritual expression, religious and cultural observances and celebrations, and social and political action. Our mission is to build a space where students feel empowered to practice Judaism on their own terms. We decided to start Chavurah because we felt a need for a new type of Jewish space on campus, separate from the established institutions. We are here to foster dialogue and take action that is aligned with our Jewish values of Tikkun Olam (social justice) and Shivyon Erech Haadam (equality of human life). As a pluralistic community, we embrace a diversity of beliefs and practices. We aim to create a space for students to learn, grow, and celebrate in ways that feel right for them.

Allow Us to Introduce Ourselves:

Hey! I'm Galya Diamond-Berman,
Last year, I took a gap year in Israel, on a program that focused on building an intentional community with 25 people. Building this community together demanded so much of one another; we invested in each other's growth, pushed each other to think differently, shared our hardships, and most importantly, learned how to love.
I came out of this experience a stronger person. Community has the power to do this to us. We shape our communities, and ultimately, through the process, it shapes us. When this meaningful year ended, it felt like a piece of me was missing. I yearned for the belonging and guidance that my community brought to me.

I also knew I craved Jewish ritual. So, I was quite disappointed when I felt such a disconnect from the Jewish spaces on campus. I felt a harsh tension participating in a space that did not align with my progressive values and favored other people's spiritual needs than my own. I find it a lot more meaningful to be an agent of change in your own life, rather than sitting with something unfulfilling or avoiding it altogether. This is what led me to help create Chavurah. I hope Chavurah can be a space that continues to be shaped by its members and ultimately make one another stronger. I aspire for a Jewish community built on hope, nurturing each other's identity exploration, exploring difficult truths, and most importantly, love.

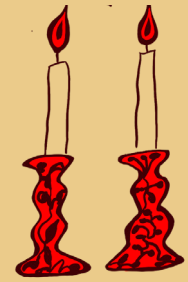
Hello! My name is Lilah Cohen. I decided to help create Chavurah because I felt a distinct lack of intentional and culturally-focused spaces for progressive and open-minded Jewish students at UMD. I found it disheartening and frustrating how so much of Jewish life on campus was defined by ideological categorization and strict religious observance rather than bridging differences, promoting open dialogue, and having fun! What I learned from my Jewish upbringing is that there is no one correct way to be Jewish. There is not one correct place to go on campus to be Jewish. There is not one opinion, thought, or practice that makes someone Jewish. I see my Jewish identity as an act of creation, not of participation. Jewishness at UMD can often feel like a category, a type of person. It is also okay to not feel Jewish, to struggle with what it means to you, to feel detached or confused. There needs to be a Jewish community that embraces these complexities. I don't see identity as a box to put myself in but rather as a deep cave to explore. There are so many parts to being human, and Judaism to me is just one part of this experience, but one that helps me feel rooted in my relationship to others and my place in this complicated world. Investing in community is investing in the people around you, and it is investing in your own spiritual exploration. Chavurah has provided me with the opportunity to do this along with others who feel the same way.



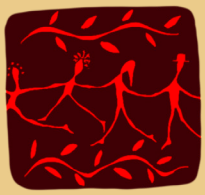
Hi friends! My name is Alexa Boltax, and I was raised in a Modern Orthodox Jewish community. This community was my home for many years despite it never really fitting for me. It was apparent to me, and most of the authority figures that knew me in my full teenage angst, that the Modern Orthodox way of life was not in my future. Once I graduated high school, I finally had some space to choose for myself. For a while, that choice was to not incorporate Jewish practices at all. When needing spiritual guidance, I turned to the Buddhist tradition, which seemed like everything Judaism, as I knew it, was not. Within the past year or so, specifically in the aftermath of Oct. 7th, my Jewish identity, despite my passivity in it, was something undeniable. My Jewishness was brought to the forefront of so much of my life very suddenly, and I wasn't sure at first how to deal with it. At some point, I started exploring my Jewish identity, and I began to witness all the different ways Judaism can be practiced. I found Jewish spaces that aligned with my values and spiritual visions, ones that weren't so rigid and were centered around love. Right in the middle of this explorative process, I met Galya and Lilah. They were already so confident in their Jewish identity, something so darn beautiful and something they wished to celebrate, explore, and share. They inspired me to continue on this journey and to strive for a space on campus where this could be possible.

A Brief History of the Chavurah Movement:

The Chavurah movement began in the 1960s, born into a time of increasing anti-establishment and rebellious sentiments as the struggles for justice gained momentum. The movement chose the name Chavurah because it had been used by Jews of their same spirit long ago in the late Second Temple period. Chavurah, in ancient times, represented "separatist religious fellowships that radical Jewish pietists, mystics, and scholars had formed" during their time. Radical Jews of the 60s wished to continue their legacy of forming new communities. Chavurah, in the 60s, represented a group of Reconstructionist Jews who would gather for Jewish rituals and learning, with the goal of "developing bold new" ways to express their faith that were "timely, with-it, meaningful, and in harmony with the counter cultural ideas of their day." The Chavurah movement continued to evolve, establishing commune congregations that became hubs of Jewish life and learning. Eventually, Chavurah found a lasting place in the hearts and souls of college students all over the country. Students like us began creating Chavurah chapters at their universities. These DIY, egalitarian communities stand in contrast to the existing Jewish institutions, as the commune congregations once did to the traditional synagogues of the 60s.



We are here with a vision, but ultimately, the building of this community comes from all of you. We want you to be a part of this journey with us and envision a new type of Jewish community that is fulfilling for everyone. Whether this is your first time trying something Jewish in college, you are returning to something you left for a while, or you just want to try something new, we want you to join us! Also, just come hang out… we have a fun time. We hope to see you soon.



Lots of Love,
Galya, Lilah, and Alexa
P.S.: Follow us on Instagram @Chavurah_UMD

By: Gaby Goldberg

The Exodus didn't happen.

The Exodus narrative, as recounted in the Torah, is one of the most foundational stories in Jewish tradition. It tells of the Israelites' enslavement in Egypt, their liberation by Moses through divine intervention and their miraculous escape across the parted waters of the Sea of Reeds (often referred to as the Red Sea). According to the story, Pharaoh's army, pursuing the Israelites, was drowned when the waters returned.

Scholars typically date the Exodus to around 1250 BCE, based on several clues from the biblical text and external evidence. First, the Bible states that the Israelites were in Egypt for 430 years, which would align with the scholarly estimates that Semitic-speaking peoples arrived in Egypt during the 17th century BCE. Second, Exodus 1:11 mentions that the Hebrew slaves built the cities of Pi-Ramses and Pithom, both of which were prominent during the mid-13th century BCE. Third, the Merneptah Stele, a stone inscription from around 1208 BCE, contains the earliest non-biblical reference to Israel, describing it as a people in Canaan. This confirms that Israel existed as a distinct group by the late 13th century BCE.

If the Exodus occurred in the mid-13th century BCE, it would have taken place during the reign of Pharaoh Ramses II (1279–1213 BCE). However, this raises a historical inconsistency: if Pharaoh and his entire army were destroyed in the Sea of Reeds, how did Egypt remain a dominant military power afterward? Pharaoh Merneptah, Ramses II's successor, even boasts of military victories, including over Israel, on the Merneptah Stele. This contradicts the biblical claim that Egypt suffered a catastrophic loss.

Despite extensive archaeological exploration in the Sinai Peninsula, there is no evidence of a large-scale Israelite presence or a 40-year wandering. Nomadic groups typically leave behind traces such as pottery, tools, campfire remains and burial sites. Yet, no such evidence has been found from the late Bronze Age (c. 1250 BCE), the period when the Exodus is said to have occurred.

For instance, the Bible claims there were 603,550 Israelite men over the age of 20. Including women and children, this would amount to 2–3 million people. If such a massive population had lived in the Sinai for four decades, we would expect to find extensive archaeological remains—mass graves, pottery shards, animal bones or remnants of temporary settlements. But nothing of the sort has been discovered.

Egypt was renowned for its meticulous record-keeping, documenting everything from military campaigns to economic shifts. Yet there is no mention in Egyptian texts of a mass Israelite enslavement or exodus. If Egypt had lost millions of slaves and its entire army, it would have been a significant event, likely recorded in their annals. Instead, records from Ramses II's reign depict Egypt as a thriving and powerful empire, with no indication of such a catastrophic loss.

Here's why the story still matters.

If the Israelites had left Egypt and invaded Canaan, we would expect to see evidence of widespread destruction in Canaanite cities around 1200 BCE. However, major sites like Jericho and Ai show no signs of violent upheaval during this period, as established by numerous archaeological digs of the site. This lack of evidence supports the theory that the Israelites did not arrive in Canaan as conquerors but emerged from within Canaanite society itself.

The prevailing scholarly theory, known as the "gradual emergence model," posits that the Israelites were originally Canaanites who gradually developed a distinct identity. This process likely involved complex cultural, socioeconomic and religious differentiation over time, rather than a sudden conquest or migration.

A more controversial hypothesis suggests that the Israelites may have drawn inspiration from the Hyksos, a Semitic-speaking people who ruled parts of Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period (1650–1550 BCE). The Hyksos were eventually expelled from Egypt and may have returned to the Levant. Some scholars argue that the memory of this expulsion influenced the Exodus narrative, which was later reinterpreted as a story of divine deliverance and justice.

What Does This Mean for Judaism?

If the Exodus did not occur as described in the Bible, does this undermine Judaism? Not necessarily. The power of the Exodus story lies not in its historical accuracy but in its enduring themes of justice, liberation and divine redemption. Like many foundational myths, its value is in the moral and philosophical lessons it imparts, rather than its literal truth.

Biblical literalists often argue that the historicity of the Torah is essential to Jewish belief. However, this perspective overlooks the deeper purpose of these stories. Whether or not Adam and Eve existed, or whether the Exodus happened as described, does not diminish the ethical and philosophical richness of the Jewish tradition. The Exodus narrative, like Aesop's fables, teaches timeless truths about human dignity, freedom and the pursuit of justice.

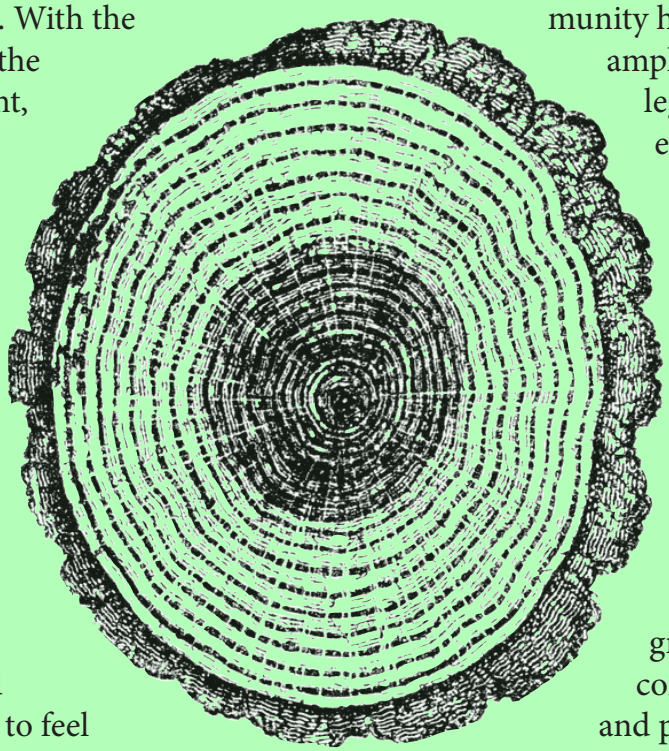
In short, the Exodus story matters not because it happened exactly as written, but because it continues to inspire and guide us. It is a testament to the power of storytelling to shape identity, the importance of justice, and humanity's perpetual struggle for liberation.

Tikkun Olam Starts at Home

By: Dahlia Newman

As Jews, we are called to care for the world around us. The concept of tikkun olam, or "repairing the world," is a core Jewish value—one that has shaped my upbringing and serves as the bridge between my love for Judaism and my passion for the environment.

Now, more than ever, our commitment to tikkun olam is essential. With the U.S. withdrawing from the Paris Climate Agreement, environmental protections being rolled back, and policies favoring increased oil drilling, our planet and all of its inhabitants are at risk. The past few years have been the hottest on record, and the consequences of climate change continue to accelerate.



In times of political and social turmoil, it is easy to feel detached from issues like climate change. However, the urgency to take action is more pressing than ever. While we may not have control over national policies, we do have the power to make an impact in our own lives and communities. Tikkun olam does not have to start with the world—it needs to start with your world.

Small but meaningful actions, like composting, recycling, conserving energy, and shopping secondhand, are all ways to create a more sustainable lifestyle.

Beyond individual efforts, collective action is crucial. Getting involved in environmental initiatives on campus or in your local community helps to amplify our impact. As a college student, I knew I wanted to connect my passion for the environment with my Jewish values. That's why I helped start an Adamah on Campus chapter, bringing together like-minded individuals to take action. Over the past year, we have organized campus cleanups, created meaningful holiday programming, maintained our composting system at Hillel, and planned many upcoming exciting events and initiatives.

Our responsibility to repair the world is deeply embedded in Jewish tradition. Through making conscious choices and engaging in collective activism, we can embody tikkun olam and work toward a more just, sustainable future for generations to come.

The Thing That Lives in Your Washer and Eats Your Socks

By: Zach Schwartz

The circular door to my dwelling aggressively flies open and the seering ominous fluorescent light floods into my home. I squeeze my amorphis body into the back corner of the cylindrical room to avoid touching the light. Mmm, yes, it is supper time.

Through the opened portal, food begins to fly into my home, might I say, with some aggression. But no matter, aggression bothers me not. Food is food. Items come piling in towering so high, the light entering the room is nearly completely blocked out. Ahhh, yes, it is almost feasting time. I relax my shape from pressed against the back wall to a more flattened state, touching some of the delectable items, so graciously tossed into my abode. I form a tentacle-like appendage and seep into a smaller item closest to me, just for a little tasty-taste. The appendage I form seeps into the porous item, saturating it. Ahhh yes, cotton and a fair amount of polyester. Positively BRIMMING with nutrients. I touch another item. Mmmmm nylon. Yes, yes, the usual.

My home vibrates as the front door is slammed shut. After a brief delay, water mixed with another frothy material comes pouring into my den, soaking the food. The water against my fluid-like body is a strange sensation but it makes it easier to absorb the nutrients. I let myself flow with the water, saturating the cloth, nylon and polyester, among other sensational items. Once the water has completed flowing into the room so that it is filled almost halfway to the top, the room starts to rotate. The spinning begins to pick up speed and the centrifugal force presses my body deeper into the fabrics of my food receptacles.

I increase my solubility and oh my the flavors! So many quality odors to absorb! The sweet and sour notes of musky weeks old sweat light up my body. I concentrate myself through different clothes, traveling to the finest places on earth with each new item. A large denim material still has some salty-tasting crunchy dirt. Mmmm I give it a 7 out of 10. I move on to the next item, a fully polyester substance with not much to offer. Hmm this thing seems to be out of place. Quite bland indeed.

After much feasting, I nearly become satiated until I reach the creme de la creme. OH MY! Surely this is my favorite substance of all the feasts. Truly the zenith of fine dining, the chef's kiss if you will. It is just a small item, but the pure complexity of flavor of the item resonates through every inch of my being. This is truly the most potent sweat I have ever tasted. The savory flavors rush in like the ocean's tide, overwhelming me with the robust taste and notes of earthiness as I absorb them into my body.

All of the sudden the spinning starts to slow. How could this be? I only just began feasting on this great mana from the heavens. I am not finished with this great delicacy yet! How could the chefs be so hasty? When the spinning comes to a complete stop, I concentrate my entire body on my small food item. The horrible penetrating light begins to seep back in as the chef removes the fabrics that are now devoid of nutrients. I clutch onto my small delicacy tightly and cover it with most of my slimy body. I then activate my camouflage, blending into the walls of my home as best as possible. Surely the chef won't notice just one fabric missing. I cannot let it go just yet, so much more to consume! Once all of the empty food receptacles have been removed from my house, a satisfying vibration comes from the front door and I am once again, bathed in comforting darkness. I release my camouflage and by a miracle, my delicacy still remains. Ah, truly a gracious gift. I let myself soak into the food once more and the gourmet flavors once again wash over me. I eat and eat until not even the food receptacle itself remains and I have absorbed every ounce of its mass.

MAD LIBS An NHBT Love Story

_____ (NAME 1) and _____ (NAME 2) met at the _____ (ADJECTIVE) National Hillel Basketball Tournament at UMD. After _____ (VERB) ing all night at Bar Night, they met up at the Friday night dinner and made extremely _____ (ADJECTIVE) eye contact all night. At one point, they even stood next to each other in line for food, asking the classic questions like "What's your favorite _____ (NOUN) ?" and "What do you study?" They talked about their mutual love for _____ (VERB) ing and all things _____ (NOUN) . They were planning their future. However, it all came crashing down when _____ (NAME 1) realized _____ (NAME 2) went on a Shabbos walk with their best friend at Camp Stone 5 years ago – things were never the same. At Saturday night's championship game, however, fate brought them together when the Yeshiva University team _____ (VERB) ed the UCLA team on the court, and they both _____ (VERB) ed with joy. Desperate to rekindle the spark, _____ (NAME 1) invited _____ (NAME 2) to a late-night Havdalah service at Hillel, where they accidentally spilled _____ (NOUN) all over their _____ (NOUN) s. While cleaning up, they started debating the best way to make a perfect _____ (FOOD) for Shabbat dinner, laughing so hard they forgot about the Camp Stone drama. _____ (NAME 1) tried to impress _____ (NAME 2) by _____ (VERB) ing across the entire room while balancing five _____ (NOUN) s on their head. After a couple seconds of this _____ (ADJECTIVE) act, the _____ (NOUN) s on their head came crashing down. By Sunday's NHBT closing ceremony, they were paired up for a _____ (VERB) contest. It was all about who could be the most _____ (ADJECTIVE) . _____ (NAME 1) shouted _____ (INSERT ANYTHING) in the middle of the quiet round, making everyone burst into laughter. _____ (NAME 2) fell in love. Bonding over their shared awkwardness, they ditched the NHBT barbeque, knowing it would be _____ (ADJECTIVE) . They decided instead to grab _____ (FOOD) s at a _____ (ADJECTIVE) food truck. In the airport, just moments before _____ (NAME 1) _____ (VERB) ed to catch their flight, _____ (NAME 2) called them, professing their love. "I've never _____ (VERB) ed like this with someone from _____ (PLACE) before. You're so special and _____ (ADJECTIVE) . I can't stand the thought of _____ (VERB) ing without you. When can I see you again?" The two _____ (VERB) ed with excitement and made plans to meet at _____ (PLACE) for _____ (JEWISH HOLIDAY) later that year. By 2027, we wouldn't be surprised to see an engagement post on Only _____ (NOUN) 's Instagram featuring _____ (NAME 1) from _____ (PLACE) and _____ (NAME 2) from _____ (PLACE) .

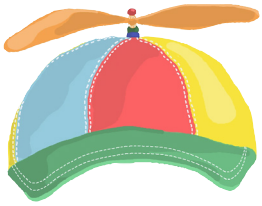
THE YIDDISH LESSON

YIDDISH CURSES YOU WOULDN'T WISH UPON YOUR WORST ENEMY

"KHASENE HOBN ZOL ER MIT DI MALEKH HAMOVES TOKHTER"

HE SHOULD MARRY THE DAUGHTER OF THE ANGEL OF DEATH

"PISHER"



BEDWETTER

"BEHEYMA"

BEAST/COW

"ER ZOL AYNSHLINGEN A SHIRIM UN ES ZOL EFENEN IN BOYKH"

HE SHOULD SWALLOW AN UMBRELLA AND IT SHOULD OPEN IN HIS BELLY

"HINDERT HAYZER ZOL ER HOBN, IN YEDER HOYZ A HINDERT TSIMERN, IN YEDER TSIMER TSVONSIK BETN UN KADUKHES ZOL IM VARFN FIN EYN BET IN DER TSVEYTER"

A HUNDRED HOUSES SHALL HE HAVE, IN EVERY HOUSE A HUNDRED ROOMS, AND IN EVERY ROOM 20 BEDS, AND A DELIRIOUS FEVER SHOULD DRIVE HIM FROM BED TO BED.

"LIGN IN DRERD UN BAKN BEYGL!"

MAY YOU LIE IN THE GROUND AND BAKE BAGELS

"OYSKRENKN ZOL ER DUS MAMES MILAKH"

HE SHOULD GET SO SICK AS TO COUGH UP HIS MOTHER'S MILK

BE CAREFUL WHO YOU CURSE

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